

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Favorable consideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 7-15, 22-27, 34-40 and 53-55 are presently pending in this application, Claims 1-6, 16-21, 28-33, 41-52 and 56-140 having been canceled, and Claims 10, 22, 34 and 36 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 140 were objected to because of the informalities; Claim 119 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for being indefinite; Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 28 -103 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Kitamura et al. (U.S. Patent 6,400,463); Claims 104-139 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kayano et al. (U.S. Patent 5,812,747); and Claims 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kitamura et al. in view of Nakai et al. (U.S. Patent 6,081,342).

With regard to the outstanding objections and rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, in the claims, Applicants respectfully request that Claims 1, 119 and 140 be canceled without prejudice. Furthermore, Claims 10, 22, 34 and 36 have been amended solely to clarify their subject matters, and thus the pending claims are believed to be in compliance with the requirements of the statute. Also, these claim amendments are not believed to narrow the scopes of the claims. If, however, the Examiner disagrees, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned who will be happy to work in a joint effort to derive mutually satisfactory claim language.

Applicants respectfully traverse the outstanding art rejections based on the following discussions.

Kitamura et al. is directed to a tandem connection system including the master station 1001 and slave stations 1002-1004.<sup>1</sup> According to Kitamura et al., the master station 1001 sends a status request command (Code 03) to all the slave stations 1002-1004 so as to check their status. In response, each of the slave stations 1002-1004 notifies its status by sending the status send command (Code 05) to each of the stations in the system. When the master station 1001 does not receive the status send command (Code 05) from a slave station after a predetermined period, the master station 1001 determines that the slave station is not connected to the system.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the master station 1001 displays on its screen which stations in the system can be linked to it as slave stations, allowing a user to choose which slave stations to use. In Kitamura et al., the status send command (Code 05) includes parameters such as the system addresses of designated slave stations, occurrences of errors, various flags showing waiting and copying states, types of paper sheets, and supply of paper sheets.<sup>3</sup> As such, Kitamura et al. is believed to merely disclose displaying the choices of slave stations which can be linked to the master station 1001, and selecting slave stations to be used from the choices through the master stations 1001.

Kayano et al. is directed to a copying system including a master copying machine and slave copying machines connected to the master copying machine. The master copying machine sends to the slave copying machines a request to send their status information to it. The status information relates to the status inside the slave copying machines.<sup>4</sup> When the slave copying machines send their status information to the master copying machine, the master copying machine determines which slave copying machines are to be used based on the copying conditions set by an operator and the status information of the master and slave

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<sup>1</sup> See Kitamura et al., Fig.1.

<sup>2</sup> See id., column 5, lines 32-37.

<sup>3</sup> See id., column 5, lines 27-32.

<sup>4</sup> See Kayano et al., column 3, lines 42-43.

copying machines. According to Kayano et al., the status information of the slave copying machines notified to the master copying machine are simply the specifications of the slave copying machines, and Kayano et al. are believed to merely disclose selecting slave copying machines before the master copying machine links to them.

Nakai et al. is directed to an image forming system including copying machines. In Nakai et al., functions which can be provided by each of the copying machines are listed in a table. Thus, when a user selects a certain function from the table through a master copying machine, a slave copying machine which can be linked to the master copying machine and execute the function is selected from the table. Thus, the master copying machine links to the slave copying machine and executes the function. Because the functions of the copying machines which can be linked are listed in the table beforehand, Nakai et al. do not disclose notifying the available functions among the copying machines. Also, Fig. 8(b) of Nakai et al. mentioned in the outstanding Office Action merely illustrates displaying the functions which can be provided by the copying machine operating on its own, not those functions which can be provided to the user by the slave copying machine already linked to the master copying machine.

From the discussions presented above, it is believed that none of Kitamura et al., Kayano et al. and Nakai et al. discloses, alone or in combination, reporting functions which cannot be executed by the slave stations already linked to the master station, displaying which functions can and cannot be executed by the slave stations already linked to the master station, displaying only functions which can be executed by the slave stations already linked to the master station, and canceling the link already established between the master and slave stations when a function which cannot be executed is selected through the master station. It is believed that Claims 7, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38 and 53 recite at least one of these features, and thus even the combined teachings of Kitamura et al., Kayano et al. and Nakai et al. are

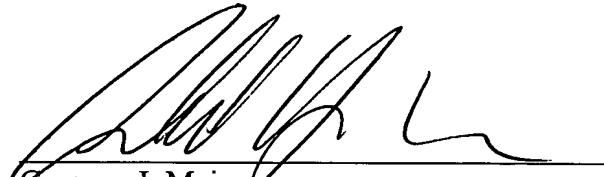
not believed to render the subject matters recited in Claims 7, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38 and 53 obvious.

For the foregoing reasons, Claims 7, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38 and 53 are believed to be allowable. Furthermore, since Claims 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 35, 37, 39, 40, 54 and 55 ultimately depend from one of Claims 7, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38 and 53, substantially the same arguments set forth above also apply to these dependent claims. Hence, Claims 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 35, 37, 39, 40, 54 and 55 are believed to be allowable as well.

In view of the amendments and discussions presented above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early action favorable to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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